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CHAMOUNI
AND
MONT BLANC:

A VISIT TO THE VALLEY
AND AN ASCENT OF THE MOUNTAIN IN THE
AUTUMN OF 1855.

BY
EUSTACE ANDERSON.

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PREFACE.

IT is with great diffidence that the author places this little volume before the public, the more so that a great deal has been already written and said upon the subject of which it treats ; still, considering how few books of travel would be written, were authors deterred from writing because others have already gone over the ground before them, and consequently how many errors would remain uncorrected—how many new facts would be lost—he ventures to hope there may be as much of novelty in his narrative as may prove sufficient apology for its publication.

ST. LEONARD'S, MORTLAKE,

February, 1856.

THE HISTORY OF

It is with great pleasure that the author
of this little volume before the public the
work which a great deal has been already
written and upon the subject of which it
treats; still considering how few books of
this kind have been written, and how
few writers have been able to write
upon the subject before them, and how
difficult it is to write upon a subject
which is so common, and yet so
important, and how much it is to be
regretted that so few have been able to
write upon it in a manner which is
both interesting and useful.

By the Author of
"The History of the English Language"

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE.
Departure from London—Arrival at Ostende— Cologne—Kœnigswinter—The Drachenfels— Rolandseck	1

CHAPTER II.

The Rhine to Maintz—New Friends—Mannheim— Heidelberg—Strasburgh—Basle—First sight of the Alps—Berne—Lausanne—View of Mont Blanc—Geneva	14
---	----

CHAPTER III.

Departure from Geneva—Visé of Passports at the Sardinian Frontier—Sallenches—Avalanche of Rock—Arrival at Chamouni—The Fire—Sunset on Mont Blanc—The Valley	27
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

Montanvert—The Glaciers—Crossing the Mer De Glace—Crevasses—The Chapeau—A curious Traveller—The Pavillon des Pyramides— Crossing the Glacier Des Bossons—Moraine— Cascades Des Pelerins and Du Dard—Determin- ation to attempt the Ascent of Mont Blanc	34
--	----

CHAPTER V.

	PAGE.
Servoz—Live Chamois—Saint Gervais—The Hotel du Mont Joli —The Valley of Mont Joie—Pass of the Col du Bonhomme — Return over the Forclaz to Chamouni—System of Guides—Dis- appointment	49

CHAPTER VI.

Excursion to the Jardin—A Lady Traveller—Fresh Consultation—Preparations for the Ascent	63
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

Arrival of Travellers who had Ascended Mont Blanc without Guides—Procuring Guides—The Start —Ascent to the Grands Mulets—Sunset	71
---	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Night at the Grands Mulets—Continuation of the Ascent—The Grand Plateau—Corridor—Mur de la Côte—Petits Mulets—The Summit— Descent to Chamouni	84
--	----

CHAPTER IX.

Effects of the Ascent—Observations—The Flegère— Departure from Chamouni—Confluence of the Arve and the Rhone—Arrival at Paris—The Exhibition—Home	102
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

Concluding Remarks	111
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CHAMOUNI AND MONT BLANC.

CHAPTER I.

Departure from London—Arrival at Ostende—Cologne—
Koenigswinter—The Drachenfels—Rolandseck.

WHEN, in July, 1855, I bade adieu to an intimate friend upon his departure from London for Chamouni, I had no intention of leaving England, and little thought that in a few days I should travel in the same direction, and plant my foot upon the summit of Europe's mountain monarch. But who can tell what a day may bring forth? How trivial a circumstance will sometimes exercise an important influence over our actions!

My friend at his departure, amongst other trifling commissions, requested me to return a book he had borrowed from a library. I obtained the book from his chambers for that purpose, and discovered it to be "Talfourd's Vacation Rambles," which I had never read. From curiosity I glanced over a few of its pages, and these were so attractive, that I read the whole of the work. By the time I had finished, the author's charming description so fired my imagination that I felt an uncontrollable desire to visit the scenes he has so beautifully pictured, above all the Vale of Chamouni and Mont Blanc, and began to entertain a vague idea of attempting the ascent of the mountain. The next day I procured a "Murray," enthusiasm reached its height, I resolved to go, and began to prepare for the journey.

I purchased a knapsack, which, when packed, including pens, ink and paper, and a waterproof coat and leggings strapped on the top, weighed exactly 12lbs. In addition, I carried a small leathern case, suspended by a strap from my shoulder, and containing my "Murray"

telescope, sketch-book, and brandy-flask, *voilà tout*. I must not omit to mention that, amongst the contents of my knapsack, I had two pair of flannel cricketing trousers, which I found invaluable for walking in Switzerland. I should strongly advise all pedestrian tourists to use them, with jackets of the same material.

I need scarcely dwell upon the immense advantage of travelling with very little baggage. It is a theme that has been dwelt upon by travellers from time immemorial. What annoyances are avoided, and how independent one feels of commissionaires, porters, *et hoc genus omne* !

Intending to travel by way of the Rhine, in order to pay a visit to some friends residing at the village of Koenigswinter, I left London on Wednesday, the 25th July, 1855, per mail train for Dover, thence by boat to Ostende. The sea was as smooth as glass, and those who had stowed themselves away below, with the full expectation of paying the usual tribute to Neptune, were agreeably disappointed. We arrived at Ostende about 5 a.m. on the morning of the 26th. Upon

stepping ashore, I steered clear of the band of touters who, as usual, were shouting out the names of the various hotels of the place, and proceeded to the Custom-house, where I breakfasted on the first floor, having previously enjoyed a good wash in a little room partitioned off the end of the *salle à manger*. Breakfast over, and the Custom-house regulations disposed of, including the registration of my age with great solemnity in a large ledger, I seized my knapsack and sauntered along to the railway station, in order to take the train to Cologne. Arrived at the station, I looked about me, and amongst other things observed a post office carriage attached to the train; inside it was fitted up with boxes and pigeon-holes, the clerks were busy weighing and sorting the letters, and in the door was a letter-box, so that people standing on the platform could post a letter without trouble upon the arrival of the train at any station.

I picked out a compartment which contained a German family, consisting of an old lady, her son and daughter, the daughter's husband, two children, and a nurse. For

some distance we rode in silence, but I won their hearts by taking notice of the children, and soon discovered that one of the gentlemen talked a little English, the other a little French, so that we got on very well together, and I found them very agreeable. They were very anxious to hear of news about the war, and seemed to sympathise thoroughly with the allies. The country, after leaving Ostende appeared flat but well cultivated, rich in crops, and plentifully dotted over with white farm-houses.

At Malines I lost my pleasant companions, who were going on to Brussels, and soon found myself in a carriage with English people, all very silent and dull. The scenery after reaching Lieges is very fine; the ground rises and falls in rapid undulations, like a sea, at right angles to the railway, and is beautifully clothed with wood, whilst a fine stream meanders through the valley on both sides of road.

At Herbersthal, the frontier town of Prussia, my passport was demanded, and I observed a remarkable difference of appear-

ance between the officials there and those of Belgium. In Belgium they had round faces and flat caps; but at Herbersthal the faces thrust into the carriage were long by nature, and rendered still longer in appearance by peaked beards and the tall caps that surmounted them. The Belgians look a simple amiable people; the Prussians have a much more martial appearance.

When the train arrived at Cologne, I found a friend from Kœnigswinter waiting for me on the platform, and we immediately drove to the Hotel de Hollande, where we dined in a pleasant saloon overlooking the Rhine. I must say that my first view of this famous river did not possess me in its favour, the scenery at Cologne being very indifferent. After dinner we crossed the bridge of boats to visit a place of favourite resort called Marien Bildchen. In crossing we were delayed for about twenty minutes, whilst some of the boats were drawn on one side to allow of the passage of some vessels towed by a steam tug. When the boats were replaced, there was for a moment a large empty space,

with a crowd of expectant passengers at each end, and then, the barriers being removed, it was laughable to see them rush forward, as if to contest possession of the vacancy; but, mingling peaceably together, pass on their respective ways. During this operation, I was speculating as to the scenes we should witness were the bridges in London upon the same principle.* At Marien Bildchen we took coffee, and watched the sun setting behind Cologne. It brought out the cathedral and churches in bold relief, and the effect was fine. However I thought the cathedral looked rather a shapeless mass: it wants the spires to give it form. In the evening we perambulated some of the streets, and encountered some of the smells for which Cologne is celebrated—no wonder they invented the famous Eau de Cologne here—they want it.

The next morning we rose early, and after breakfast sallied forth to see the lions. The first place we visited was, of course, the cathedral, which, if ever finished, will be one of

* The King of Prussia has lately laid the first stone of a permanent bridge to span the Rhine at this place.

the wonders of the world. *A propos* of the finishing, I have been informed there is an ancient prophecy, declaring that when the cathedral is finished the Pope will cease to reign. All I can say is, that if his downfall depends upon the finishing of the cathedral, he is safe enough for some time to come. The ancient part of the cathedral was built of Drachenfels stone, which has proved unable to stand the weather, and crumbled away; the new part is being built of Caen stone.

In the sacristy we were shown the shrine of the founder, composed of gold and jewels, (but which had been despoiled of some of its ornaments by the French), and all the magnificent croziers, paxes, and other articles used in the service of the cathedral. One of the ciboria was 1200 years old, and a pax, splendidly ornamented, contained, I was assured, two thorns from the crown of Christ!! We were also shown the shrine of the three kings of Cologne—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. It was enclosed in a small dark chamber lighted with gas, the charge for entry being

six francs for the party. It was larger than the shrine of the founder ; but, like it, composed of gold and jewels, and a sort of door at one end being removed, discovered to us the skulls of the three kings, encircled by rich crowns. Near this shrine is the tomb of Marie de Medicis, covered by a plain stone slab.

We next visited the church of St. Ursula, said to contain the bones of St. Ursula, and her band of 11,000 virgins, supposed to have been slain by the Huns. All the skulls were ornamented with narrow bands of gold and silver stuffs, some with crowns and jewels in addition. The majority were arranged in cupboards or recesses, shut in by doors having a glazed hole before each skull. The skulls of the principal personages were in a glass case in the middle of the sacristy, which also contained a foot, and an old piece of iron said to have been the head of an arrow which slew the Saint.

The skull of the Saint was honoured with a place on the altar in the sacristy ; the bones of the bodies were arranged on the

walls, something like the arms in an armoury, to represent different sentences ; a casket of teeth was produced for our inspection, and pictures representing the life and death of the Saint were hung on the walls.

At one o'clock, in spite of the pressing entreaty of our host to stay for the *Table d'Hôte*, we started by steamer for Kœnigswinter, and enjoyed a good dinner on deck, winding up with an ice and a bottle of something *heimer*.

At four o'clock we reached the pretty village of Kœnigswinter, situated on the right bank of the Rhine at the foot of the Drachenfels, where the beautiful portion of the Rhine scenery begins. My friends, with their children, were waiting on the pier and I was soon under their hospitable roof. The next day we climbed "The Castled Crag of Drachenfels," and from the summit viewed the magnificent panorama, to be seen from thence, of mountains and plains, with the broad river winding along amongst them. Part of the rock forming the summit had recently fallen, threatening the safety of the ruins standing on it, and

workmen were busily employed at masonry work, rendered necessary to prevent their fall. One of them showed us the plan of a tall buttress of stone they were about to erect for the support of the rock. About half way up, my friends conducted me to an opening in the trees, from which I obtained a beautiful view of Rolandseck, situated higher up on the opposite bank, and the island of Nonnenwerth with its convent in the middle of the river. In the afternoon we went in a small boat to Rolandseck ; a man on shore towed us by means of a rope round his shoulders, whilst another, seated in the stern of the boat, steered. From Rolandseck we had a fine view of the Drachenfels. During our stay a heavy storm of rain swept over the mountain, shrouding it in mist, and then the sun burst through the clouds in all his splendour, lighting up the landscape until his rays rested with brightening influence upon the fairy-like island of Nonnenwerth in the stream below. Whilst taking our coffee in the garden of the hotel, I saw, to me a curious sight : bands of poor people, containing from 50 to 150 each,

passed along the road, each band preceded by a man carrying a crucifix with an effigy of our Saviour upon it, or else a banner. They were all bare-headed, and prayed aloud without cessation ; every band had a leader who followed the bannerman, reading the prayers out of a book, and observing that all repeated them ; all people meeting them took off their hats, and an organ-man who was playing in front of the hotel, stopped whilst they passed. My friends explained to me that these poor people came from afar to visit the Church of Apollinarisberg for various purposes, as for instance, to offer up prayers for the recovery of a sick person or for penance. I saw at least a dozen of these bands ; they were usually followed by a cart containing their clothes and food.

During my stay at Koenigswinter I gained some insight into the domestic arrangements of a German family. Great order seemed to prevail, everything was kept scrupulously clean, and the living was excellent ; but, here as well as elsewhere in Germany, the rooms being warmed by stoves, I missed the fire-

place with its time-honoured hearth-rug, that gives such a cozy appearance to an English dwelling, and conjures up visions of long winter evenings with the family drawn round to enjoy the cheerful blaze.

CHAPTER II.

The Rhine to Maintz—New Friends—Manheim—Heidelberg—Strasburgh—Basle—First sight of the Alps—Berne—Lausanne—View of Mont Blanc—Geneva.

It was with much regret that I parted from my kind friends ; but I had visions of Switzerland before me, which enabled me to overcome all temptations to stay, so on Monday morning, the 30th July, I left Kœnigswinter, at half past eight, by the steamer Hohenzöller, and we were soon stemming the waters of the Rhine at a rapid pace. The boat was large and speedy, and I observed with pleasure that the engines were by an English maker. At the head of the boat was a party of gentlemen, German and English, drinking wine. I was told they had been at it from the time they left Cologne, at half past five a.m., and they continued drinking (except at

dinner when they ate a little), until they landed in the evening near Maintz.

The scenery of the Rhine has been so often described by pens far abler than mine, that it could only tire a reader to do more than touch slightly upon the subject.

The day was as fine as tourist could desire ; “all nature’s face looked gay.” Enclosed by hills which, affording a strong contrast to the rugged grandeur of those of Scotland, were clothed from base to summit with the vine, the noble river rushed along. Every turn of the stream disclosed fresh beauties to the view,—Linz, Andernach, Neuwied, Coblenz with the frowning Castle of Ehrenbreitstein, St. Goar and Bingen, were passed and admired in succession. Every jutting crag had its ruined castle, whose picturesque appearance only added beauty to the scene, instead of, as of yore, inspiring the traveller with dread of pillage and oppression ; and now and then a break occurred in the hills on either side, and embosomed in the gorge one could perceive some peaceful village reposing in the sunlight.

Sometimes we appeared to be enclosed in a mountain-locked lake, and as the boat steamed along the eye in vain sought for an opening to escape, when, just as it appeared, she must run on shore, a rapid turn introduced us to another lake as charming and apparently as impossible of exit as the former. As is the case everywhere, we had lots of English people on board, eagerly perusing "Murray" and their maps at the commencement of the trip, and sinking into a lethargic state towards its termination. I dined at the *Table d'Hôte* on deck; on my right hand was Mr. Dering Williams, a young student of the East India College; and on my left an old French gentleman, who talked English capitally. That sympathy of feeling which attaches man to man was soon developed between Mr. Williams and myself. As he was bound for Switzerland, we agreed to travel in company, and commenced a friendship, since strengthened by the dangers and triumph we have shared together. We were greatly amused with a flirtation going on between the old Frenchman and a young

English lady in one of the mushroom hats, with which last autumn my fair countrywomen inundated the continent. The affair began by Monsieur firing across the table at Miss a bon-bon, to which was attached one of those mischievous mottoes, and soon made great progress. Mamma evidently looked on with an eye of disapproval, and took advantage of Monsieur's absence to look after some baggage to lecture Miss, who did not seem at all to relish Mamma's interference. When Monsieur returned he was received by the old lady with a stately bow that would have frozen an Englishman; but, nothing daunted, the gallant old fellow returned to the attack, tied on the young lady's veil, which she produced I suppose to hide her blushes, and was soon upon his old footing.

After passing Bingen, the banks of the river became flat and uninteresting, and we prepared to land. My new friend had a carpet bag—I think of it with horror. At every railway and diligence station upon starting it had to be weighed, entered, and paid for; and, unless I was very vigilant, the

officials were sure to try and weigh my knapsack with it. Then, when we arrived at our destination, we had the greatest trouble to get it; and, having got it, we were obliged to hire a porter to carry it.

We were standing by the hold, awaiting the appearance of the carpet bag, and I was expressing my determination to secure the first conveyance I could find on landing, in order to get to the railway station, when a voice behind me said—"And I'll join you if you will allow me." I turned round and discovered the beau ideal of an Englishman. Imagine a hale old gentleman, about 5ft. 10in. in height, broad shouldered, firm in build, hair and whiskers white as snow, a very handsome face, ruddy complexion, as clean and neat as a new pin, and with that indescribable independence of deportment which an Englishman only possesses. We of course expressed the pleasure we should have in his company, and as soon as the steamer touched the landing place at Biberich, I jumped ashore, seized upon the first machine (for that is the only proper name I

know for the jingling combination of wood and rotten leather) I could find, and shouting out "Eisenbahn" flung myself and knapsack into it, followed by my companions with their heavy luggage. When we were set down at the railway station, we were at a standstill, not knowing sufficient German to be able to settle with our driver. At length a polite railway official made his appearance, and at his first words, "*Que voulez vous, Messieurs?*" we felt at home, and were soon out of our difficulty. It was fine fun to see our companion Mr. H—— laying hold of first one, then another, of the railway people, and addressing them all in English, of which they understood not a word. "Here my friend," said the jolly old gentleman to one of them, at the same time taking out his watch, "have you got a clock anywhere?" The man nodded and took him out of the room. When he returned I understood from his expressions that whatever he had been introduced to it certainly was not a clock. Notwithstanding all these little mishaps, we got on pretty well, by the simple method of

being good tempered instead of putting ourselves into a storming passion, as a great many Englishmen do when in any difficulty abroad. Mr. H—— had the simplest method of settling accounts I ever saw; he spread a handful of money before them, and let them take what they liked. I observed that I feared they must cheat him occasionally, but he replied—"well I suppose they do, but it takes a great deal of their rubbish to make up a sovereign!" At last we started for Mannheim, where we put up at the Hotel de l'Europe. As soon as the voiture entered the court yard a bell sounded, and such an array of garçons made their appearance, that I expected they were going to carry us in; however, although we received considerable assistance, we were allowed to use our feet, and in a short time I had the satisfaction of hearing from Mr. H—— that it was "all right" for the landlord spoke English, and was a capital fellow, and so it turned out.

In the morning, from my bedroom window, I saw some soldiers of the Grand Duke of Baden throwing a bridge across, from an

island on which were their barracks to the main land; two superior officers came down on horseback, and halted in the shade to watch the proceedings, and a little officer skipped backwards and forwards on his toes between them and the men, with an air of greater importance than the result seemed to justify, for no sooner was the bridge completed than they pulled it to pieces again.

At half past twelve we left Mannheim for Heidelberg, where we employed three or four hours very agreeably in visiting the old Castle, and then, as there was no suitable train for Basle, we resolved to visit Strassburgh. Not having intended to visit that city, I had not obtained the French Ambassador's *visé* to my passport and anticipated a difficulty; but the official who appeared at the omnibus door, when we arrived at the French side of the bridge of boats, very politely allowed me to pass the barrier on my explaining the reason of the omission. A French lady in the omnibus observed, "That is because you are an Englishman—if you had been an Austrian or a Prussian, they would have sent

you back over the bridge again." I was glad I went: the Cathedral pleased me more than that of Cologne in its present state. We took plenty of time and saw it thoroughly, including the crypt, carved pulpit, and the famous clock, which we visited at mid-day. A cock flapped his wings and crowed till he made the church ring again; old time and an angel struck the hour; another angel turned an hour glass; a little boy immediately came forth, typifying the new born hour; and figures representing the Twelve Apostles walked past a figure of Christ, which bowed to each. I went up the tower with Mr. Williams, and the man who pointed out the principal objects of view insisted on shaking hands, saying we were "*Bons camarades à présent.*" We left Strasburgh in the afternoon, per railway, for Basle. The stations on the line as we approached Basle were built in the chalet style, with painted roofs, which, added to the roses and other shrubs climbing up the posts supporting the signal bells, gave them a very pretty effect. At Basle, we took up our abode in the Hotel of

the Three Kings. Its balconies over-hang the Rhine, which, of a beautiful cerulean colour, washes the walls of the hotel, rushing past at a fearful rate. Here, with much regret, we left our kind old friend Mr. H—, who felt rather unwell, and made up his mind to rest for a day, and then join some friends at Vevay.

Thursday, August 2nd. We travelled by diligence to Berne. The heat was so intense we could scarcely breathe; Mr. Williams turned pale, and felt an inclination to bleed at the nose, and, to add to our discomfort, the dust rose heavily in clouds, and swarms of large flies entered the carriage, stinging us occasionally very sharply. The land was cultivated in numberless small patches, the principal crop being indian corn or maize.

Near Berne we first caught sight of the Alps; every neck was stretched forth to look at them, and glorious those “cloud capp’d towers” of nature looked on that glowing day; but I found some difficulty at first in distinguishing their summits from the clouds floating about them.

At last we entered Berne, to our great relief, and put up at the Falcon. Berne is a very picturesque place, and the inhabitants appear very clean and industrious. There are numbers of fountains surmounted by figures in all the streets; the bear, the armorial bearing of the canton, is everywhere, large and small, in armour and out of armour, in all sorts of positions; and there is a bear garden, where bears are kept at the expense of the canton. The fronts of the houses are built on arches, under which is the foot pavement, so that we were able to promenade without exposure to the sun.

Friday, August 3rd. We went to see the clock strike at twelve, and found it a poor imitation of that of Strasburgh. A cock crew, but the sound was more like that of a penny whistle; an old man struck the hour, and there was a procession of bears. We finished our perambulations by a visit to the cathedral, and felt well repaid for our trouble, in examining the sculpture round the door, its stained glass windows, and lists of patriots who have fallen in defence of their country.

So much suffering had we endured from the heat on the previous day, that we made up our minds to travel at night, and accordingly at nine o'clock we took our seats in the banquette of the diligence for Lausanne. Just before starting we had a thunder storm, which cleared the air, laid the dust, and made it pleasant. Our fellow traveller was a little girl only five years old. I enquired of the *conducteur* whether she was his daughter, and he replied in the negative ; but, said the good natured fellow, “ *C'est tout le même Monsieur* ” and proceeded to envelope the little Marie in a good warm coat. She soon fell asleep, and the *conducteur* informed us that the cholera had carried off so many children in Berne, that the parents of Marie had given her in charge to him to convey to her Aunt at Lausanne, in order to be out of the way of that dreadful scourge. We chatted, laughed, smoked, sang, (not forgetting “ God save the Queen ” which the *conducteur* declared was a Swiss chanson) and dozed through the night ; and about seven o'clock next morning arrived at Lausanne, overlooking the Lake of Geneva.

First of all we breakfasted, and then took the omnibus to the point on the lake whence we were to embark for Geneva. The day was so hot that, whilst waiting at the end of the pier for the arrival of the steamer that was to convey us, I was glad to get the shelter of a post. On board the steamer the motion through the air made it cooler, and we gazed with delight at the landscape. The wondrous blue of the lake, the boats with their graceful lateen sails, and the surrounding mountains tinged here and there with the hue of the lake, composed a scene of exquisite beauty ; and, to complete our pleasure, we at length beheld the giant Mont Blanc, towering grandly to the sky. Although forty five miles distant it was distinctly visible, and a gentleman standing near me was pointing out its different parts to his friends.

On landing at Geneva, our passports were taken from us, and as we were now all impatient to reach Chamouni, we went at once to the Hotel de Ville to reclaim them.

CHAPTER III.

Departure from Geneva—Visé of Passports at the Sardinian Frontier—Sallanches—Avalanche of Rock—Arrival at Chamouni—The Fire—Sunset on Mont Blanc—The Valley.

SUNDAY, Aug. 5th. We left Geneva for Chamouni, travelling by diligence to Sallanches, and thence by voiture. Our passports were *viséd* at the Sardinian Custom-house, a short distance from Geneva, without charge—the custom of charging four francs upon which Talfourd animadverted so severely in his “Vacation Rambles,” having been swept away. The road from Sallanches winds along by the side of the Arve which, taking its rise near the Glacier du Tour, at the upper end of the Valley of Chamouni, and fed by streams issuing from the Glaciers du Tour and d’Argentiere, and by the Arveiron issuing from the Glacier des Bois at the lower end of the Mer de Glace, joins the Rhone a short distance from Geneva. Near the Pont Pelis-

sier (the bridge by which the Arve is crossed), we came to a stop, and upon alighting discovered that the road was blocked up by the *débris* of an avalanche of rock which had fallen from the cliff above a short time before. Its path could be traced upwards through the pines which were broken short off like sticks, and one huge fragment of rock had bounded across the Arve and lodged upon the opposite bank. A number of men were busy removing the impediment, and a cunning old fellow who acted as overseer explained to me that the labour was gratuitous, and unless I stood treat for a bottle of wine it would be an hour before the voiture could pass. As I felt independent of the voiture, and considered it more to their interest than mine that the road should be clear, I told Devouassoud, the diligence conducteur, that we should walk on, and we had not gone far when, *mirabile dictu*, we saw the voiture coming on after us. We were soon beset by a legion of beggars—boys selling pieces of stone—lame and blind men and girls, who offered us flowers, and branches of cherry-trees with the fruit on

them, for which they expected to be paid extravagantly. I observed two youngsters, the moment they caught sight of us, run some distance ahead and station themselves upon an eminence by the side of the road; and no sooner did we approach, than they raised two long horns with which they made music that sent my fingers to my ears.

All this time we had been continually enquiring of the conducteur about Mont Blanc, and anxiously endeavouring to obtain a good view of it, but there were too many clouds; now and then we caught glimpses of the mountain, and particularly noticed the Dome de Gouté, which at one time hid the summit from our sight. As we advanced up the valley, the most conspicuous object was the Glacier des Bossons cropping down nearly to its centre—its icy pinnacles sparkling gaily in the sunshine. Its appearance made a great impression on my mind: I considered it one of the greatest wonders I had ever seen. At length we reached the village of Chamouni, and were shown up to a bed-room in the new and unfinished portion of the Hotel de Londres. I

looked out of the window, and the sight I saw was a melancholy one. I overlooked that part of the village which had been burnt down but a few days previously : nothing was standing but the blackened walls. On descending, to my great delight, the first person I saw was my friend Mr. Edmund Coleman, who gave me some particulars of the fire which destroyed twenty-one houses and one hotel, besides doing considerable damage to the one we were then in. It broke out about three o'clock in the morning in the laundry of the Hotel de Couronne. My friend's room in the Hotel de Londres being opposite was the first to catch fire, and he had scarcely collected his things together, when the windows of his room began to crack with the heat, and he had to make a hasty retreat. Madame Tairraz had fortunately observed the fire break out and aroused all the inmates, when a scene of confusion arose that baffled description. In front of the house on the other side of the Arve is a piece of waste land, and there bedding, chairs, tables, looking-glasses, luggage, and articles of all sorts were conveyed and piled

up together. The suction hose of the engine proved to be too short, so they were obliged to make two lines of people between the hotel and the river in order to hand up buckets of water; and thus, although the roof of the hotel and one of the dependances was burnt, they managed to stop further mischief to the hotel. The dependance burnt was, with other portions of the hotel, standing in the time of De Saussure, but at that time a story lower. I must say that directly I looked about me a great many of the romantic ideas I had formed, with respect to the valley of Chamouni, vanished. Instead of the simple country inns I had been led to expect, I found large establishments, with three *table d'hôtes* a day, warm baths, London porter, and every luxury. Even in the little wooden boxes, established for the convenience of travellers upon those parts of the mountain usually visited, it is very rarely that you cannot obtain a cold fowl, ham, cheese, and a bottle of St. George or Beaujolais.

We descended in time to see the sunset. There was Mont Blanc—the summit and the

Dome de Gouté, delicately tinted with the sun's farewell rays, and appearing to rise in close proximity to the house.

“What a Glory it seem'd the first evening I gaz'd!
Mont Blanc, like a vision, then suddenly rais'd
On the wreck of the sunset, and all his array
 Of high towering Alps, touched still with a light
Far holier, purer than that of the day,
 As if nearness to heaven had made them so bright.

Then the dying, at last, of these splendours away
From peak after peak, till they left but a ray—
One roseate ray—that, too precious to fly,
 O'er the Mighty of Mountains still glowingly hung:
Like the last sunny step of Astrea, when high
 From the summit of Earth to Elysium she sprung!”

Upon my first arrival in the valley objects of view appeared huddled together, and I felt as if at the bottom of a deep pit. It was not until it had taken me two hours hard walking to arrive at what looked quite close, that I began to form some idea of distances.

The valley of Chamouni itself is not at all pretty. Along its centre runs the Arve, a stream rendered dirty by the quantity of minute particles of granite rock brought down from the glaciers; these particles are held in solution by the constant agitation of the

water in passing over its rocky bed ; if, however, a small quantity of the water is taken up in a cup, it becomes comparatively clear in a short time. On the south side, the valley is shut in by a chain of rocks and mountains, the principal of which are the Flegère, Aiguilles rouges, and Brevent. On the north side, separating the valley from the Val Ferret, the Val de Veni, and the Allée Blanche, rises the monarch of mountains, with his snowy crown, supported by numberless attendant aiguilles, round whom he casts his icy mantle with its fringe of pines. These aiguilles are rocks with, as their name implies, needle-like summits, piercing the clouds: the most remarkable aiguilles near Chamouni being the Aiguilles Du Midi, De Charmoz, De Dru, and Verte. Towards sunset they assume a peculiar red colour tinged with grey.

CHAPTER IV.

Montanvert—The Glaciers—Crossing the Mer De Glace—Crevasses—The Chapeau—A curious Traveller—The Pavillon des Pyramides—Crossing the Glacier Des Bossons—Moraine—Cascades Des Pelerins and Du Dard—Determination to attempt the Ascent of Mont Blanc.

Monday, August 6th. Almost the first thing every one does at Chamouni is to choose an Alpenstock, and it is laughable to observe the air of importance with which ladies and gentlemen, armed with these necessary implements, strut about the Court Yard of the hotel every morning whilst waiting for the guides and mules.

We followed the general rule, and then engaged a guide. Here again all ideas of romance vanished at once—it is really too bad of the people who get up prints of Swiss scenery! instead of gigantic fellows, in picturesque dresses, with faces adorned with

beard and moustache, the guides are for the most part under the ordinary height, very few of them wear even whiskers, and their dresses are of the commonest description: as one of my friends appropriately observed, our guide's coat looked like the left off garment of some Workhouse porter. Directly after breakfast we started, and, passing the Arve, bore away to the left for Montanvert and the Mer De Glace. After about an hour and a half's mounting, we arrived at a flat part of the path, from which we obtained a nice view of the valley; and even here, although there was no chalet, we found about half a dozen girls with baskets full of refreshments which they pressed us to purchase.

As our guide rejoiced in the name of Balmat, we enquired whether he was related to the famous Jacques Balmat, who first discovered the route to the top of Mont Blanc; he made out that he was his grand-nephew, although I have reason to believe he was nothing of the sort, and in answer to our further enquiries, gave us some account of

the investigations that had taken place concerning Jacques' disappearance. It seemed from his account that Jacques had gone to explore a glacier on the other side of the valley near Mont Buet; that he had taken a Chamois hunter part of the way with him, and that his baton had been afterwards found by the side of a crevasse, but he was never more heard of. They may well say that from the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step, for our guide's description of the examination of the Chamois hunter and how, when he was asked by justice,—*Ou est Jacques Balmat? Il trembloit avant la justice*—was so ludicrous, accompanied as it was by all sorts of contortions and shrugs, that we could not forbear laughing. Being in a talking humour, he related to us an anecdote about a guide who was selected from the number of his fellows, during an ascent, to cross a dangerous crevasse—an attempt to do which seemed to promise certain death. "First," said the brave fellow, "let me smoke my pipe." He sat down by the side of the yawning gulf,

lit his pipe, smoked it out, and then—crossed in safety. Having rested ourselves sufficiently, we walked on without stopping (except for a minute to bind the alpine rose around our hats), and in another hour reached the *châlet* at Montanvert—a large erection for the convenience of travellers. Here the full view of the *Mer de Glace* opened upon us, with the *Aiguille de Dru* on the opposite side.

As many of my readers may be unacquainted with the nature of the glaciers, it may not be thought altogether out of place to say a few words on the subject, as next to the mountain itself the glaciers are amongst the most wonderful phenomena of these regions.

A glacier may be described as a river of ice flowing slowly down a channel or groove in the side of a snow mountain, and having its source in the masses of snow which from time to time are deposited upon the highest parts of the mountain, and become by the action of the sun and frost consolidated into

ice. In its downward progress it becomes rent and split up into crevasses and blocks of all shapes and sizes ; and immense blocks of granite, broken off the aiguilles bordering the glacier, roll down upon its surface, and are carried along slowly into the valley or deposited at the side of the glacier. I may endeavour to account for the rending and splitting up of the glacier, by supposing that in passing over its rocky bed an obstruction may sometimes occur tending to stop either the upper or lower part of the glacier in its course. In the former case the weight of the lower part would carry it on and cause it to break off from the obstructed part, thus forming crevasses ; in the latter case, the upper part continually gathering weight from its source would press upon the lower, the ice at the point of obstruction would be burst up and shattered, until the weight overcoming the resistance, all would move on as before. Again, where two or more glaciers meet, as in the case of the glaciers Tacul, Lechaud, and Telèfre, the pressure of one against

another would naturally crush and force them up in fragments ; and when two glaciers part, as in the case of the glacier des Bossons and that of Tacconay, the tendency would be the other way, viz., to form crevasses. A sudden fall or contraction in the bed of the glacier must also greatly influence its shape. As the glacier flows along, an immense mass of rocky *débris* is carried along and deposited at each side ; this accumulation is called the moraine of the glacier, and comprises a mixture from granite sand to blocks of some tons weight. When two glaciers meet, the moraines are carried along between them, and may be traced for some distance along their united surfaces. An excellent representation of a glacier may be given by breaking up a loaf of sugar into pieces and throwing them down along a table. Upwards of thirty glaciers stream down the sides of Mont Blanc ; the principal ones being on the Chamouni side, the Glaciers du Tour, d'Argentière, Des Bois, Des Bossons, and De Tacconay ; on the Italian side, those—De l'Allée Blanche, De Miage, and De la Brenva.

Standing in the midst of some large glacier or seated by its side, the traveller soon feels that all is in motion and subject to nature's immutable law of constant change. First, perhaps, he will notice a trickling down of particles of grit followed by an avalanche of rock from one of the aiguilles; then he will now and then hear the dull echoing sound of a rock or piece of ice as it goes plunging down into the depths of a crevasse, and awe stricken behold a ponderous mass of ice glide swiftly along the glacier with a noise like thunder. These phenomena are more especially perceivable upon a hot day; the sun's rays melt the surface of the glacier, numberless rills of water are formed which flow on until lost in some crevasse or hole, whence they are conveyed by subterranean channels to the bottom of the glacier—from the heat they have acquired, considerably influencing its progress and form; and emerging in the valley from a dismal ice cavern, perhaps constitute the source of a mighty river carrying fertility and plenty through the plains.

We descended upon the Mer de Glace, and

accompanied by two local guides, crossed over to the other side in about twenty minutes—

“ O’er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest’s foam,
Frozen in a moment—”

We were assisted in our passage by marks placed by the guides, sometimes consisting of a little heap of stones, sometimes of a branch of a tree with a handkerchief on it. We passed many large crevasses, and regarded with never-ceasing wonder and admiration the splendid azure colour, inclining occasionally to green, of the ice in the depths below.

On the other side we followed a pathway leading down the side of the glacier to the Chapeau. This pathway (a portion of which, cut out of the rock, is called the “Mauvais Pas”) was, our guide said, completed by the guides about two years ago; it runs along the face of a precipice in some parts nearly perpendicular, and requires a steady head and good nerve to pass. As we went along our guide indulged us with another anecdote about a voyageur (not an

Englishman, I am happy to say,) who was so terrified at this place that he sat down and cried! It is no uncommon occurrence for ladies to travel by this path to the Chapeau. A short distance beyond the Mauvais Pas we gained a spot, whence we obtained a view of that part of the Mer de Glace where it falls over into the valley forming the Glacier des Bois, and the grandeur of the scene at once arrested our steps. Here the glacier was split up into giant blocks of ice to which all we had seen before were dwarfs. Now and then the stillness of the scene would be disturbed by some huge block, loosened by the action of the sun, coming crashing along the centre of the glacier, splintering everything in its way, until, itself broken up, part would descend into a crevasse with a dull booming sound, and the rest disappear in a shower of snowy fragments amongst the pinnacles below.

At the chapeau we found one of the little wooden boxes poetically termed *châlets*; mine host soon made his appearance, and in a few minutes we were discussing his good cheer. We had just finished when we were

startled by the appearance of a young traveller, who reeled into the room, languidly resigned his Alpenstock to his guide, and then sank down upon a bench as if “exhausted nature could endure no more.” One of our party enquired if anything was the matter with him, but received no answer. He coughed, he choked, he blew, and finally ordered in the landlord, of whom he enquired after several expensive wines, and desired to see the wines he had. The landlord retired, and soon returned with five or six bottles in his hands, which our strange visitor looked at for a minute, and then—ordered in a bottle of Vin Ordinaire! Having imbibed some of the invigorating compound, he at length deigned to notice us. His conversation proceeded somewhat as follows, every sentence being wound up by a fit of choking and puffing:—
“Been up the Flegère—Came down and up here in two hours—Was up the Boo-et (Buet) sixteen hours in the snow (sensation)—Found a gentleman’s card—who had been up there before me—After we came down—There was a snow storm—The guide said,—

{DIII}

{DIII}

If we had been a little later we must have been lost.” When he had thus endeavoured to impress us with his importance, he closed the conversation, and the hideous noises went on as before. My friends quietly slipped out one after the other ; and, at last, after standing my ground manfully for some time, I was fairly “puffed” out of the door, and joined my friends, who were lying on the grass outside. A short time elapsed, and the puffer came out too, resumed his Alpenstock, and wound up, what we considered a gross piece of affectation, by following his guide down the path with a reeling motion, as if in the extremity of fatigue ; although, we were aware from his enquiries, that he intended to reverse our track to Montanvert, which would require a man comparatively fresh to accomplish. We soon descended to Chamouni, and, with appetites sharpened by the mountain air, did ample justice to the dinner set before us.

Tuesday, August 7th. I accompanied Mr. Coleman to the Pavillon des Pyramides, a small chalet on the Montagne de la Côte, on

the further side of the Glacier des Bossons, about half an hour's walk from the hotel, where we were exactly upon a level with the bases of the tall pinnacles of ice forming the lower portion of the glacier: many of them were upwards of fifty feet high, and all tinted of a delicate blue colour, the ice in purity forming a wonderful contrast to that of the Mer de Glace. We sat for about two hours in front of the chalet sketching the glacier. A few days before my arrival the shock of an earthquake had been felt in the valley; Mr. Coleman told me he was sitting where we then were when it took place, and that he felt the shock and observed a pile of wood move which was stacked near.

As soon as we were tired of sketching we ascended through the wood above, in order to cross the glacier. The woman at the chalet wished me to hire crampons (a sort of patten with four spikes to strap on the foot), assuring me I could not go over the glacier without them, but I refused. Luckily, she followed us; for in order to reach the surface of the glacier, we were obliged to climb a

slanting wall of ice about eight feet high, and, not having nails in my shoes, I found it impossible to get up; the sun had melted the surface, which made it still worse, so that as fast as I got up a step, down I slipped again. The woman looked on, enjoying my discomfiture, and at last I was obliged to effect a compromise by getting her to bring a small ice hatchet she kept hidden somewhere close by: with this steps were soon cut, and up I climbed. Once upon the surface, travelling was easy enough; although, broken up both above and below into large crevasses and blocks, at this place the glacier was comparatively smooth, the few crevasses in it were very small, and the ice was pure in colour, with here and there a considerable admixture of grit.

The moraine on the other side was a very bold one; in its extent and composition a marvellous proof of the irresistible power of frost, which, rending the hardest rocks, casts them down to be carried along and ground to pieces by the glacier. We soon found out that it would not do to follow one another in

climbing over it, as sometimes the piece of rock on which the foremost stepped would give way, carrying with it a dozen others in its course, and endangering the legs of the person below. After a good deal of scrambling we got over the moraine, and directed our steps to the Cascades des Pelerins and Du Dard ; the former was once one of the wonders of Chamouni, on account of the waters falling upon a rock and bounding off in the shape of an arc, but the rock got destroyed and the fall is not worth looking at. At the Cascade du Dard we entered the chalet, which is kept by Sophie Favret, a good tempered young woman, who may be styled pretty in comparison with the general run of women of the valley. There was the usual collection of stones, carvings, walking-sticks, and chamois horns ; and we obtained a bottle of wine, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and then proceeded on to Chamouni.

Thursday, August 9th. Mr. Williams, Mr. Coleman, and I, went up to Montanvert, intending to visit the Jardin ; but rain came on, a mist shut everything from view, and we

grumblingly retraced our steps. In the evening, the Rev. Mr. Templer introduced himself, saying, that hearing we were desirous, like himself, of attempting the ascent of Mont Blanc, he should be happy to join in the attempt. To this we cordially agreed, and immediately held a consultation with Victor Tairraz, (the brother of our worthy landlord), whom we desired to have as our chief guide; he reported favorably as to the state of the crevasses, and it was settled that Mr. Templer, Mr. Coleman, and I should attempt the ascent on the ensuing Monday.

CHAPTER V.

Servoz—Live Chamois—Saint Gervais—The Hotel du Mont Joli—The Valley of Mont Joie—Pass of the Col du Bonhomme—Return over the Forclaz to Chamouni—System of Guides—Disappointment.

FRIDAY, August 10th. In order to pass the time until Monday, we determined to visit the Col de la Seigne, on the Italian side of the mountain; and as Mr. Templer and Mr. Birbeck (a veteran glacier traveller, who ascended Mont Blanc in 1854, and had just accomplished the ascent of Monte Rosa) were going as far as St. Gervais to meet some friends, they kindly allowed us to share their voiture. The drive was a very agreeable one.

For some distance we retraced the road by which we had come from Geneva; and in passing through the village of Servoz, we stopped for a short time at the Hotel des Balances, kept by a sister and brother-in-law of Sophie Favret of the Pelerins. A board

on a house near attracted our attention, bearing the inscription, "*Ici on fait voir un Chamois vivant.*" I entered with Mr. Williams, and we were gratified by seeing the only chamois we met with during our journey. The room in which it was confined was large, and at one side of it was a cupboard about four feet high. Upon approaching the chamois, it bounded upon the top of the cupboard with the greatest ease, and crouched down to allow us to caress it. It was of an elegant shape, with beautiful eyes, but its coat (perhaps owing to confinement) was coarse. When it stood up, I particularly remarked the fidelity with which the carvings sold in the country represented the position assumed by the animal. A French lady and gentleman came in, and the lady, with all the vivacity of her nation, launched out in praise of the chamois; approached her lips to it, smacked them as if bestowing innumerable kisses, and appeared in ecstasies. After this sight we returned to the voiture, and resumed our journey, turning to the left and crossing the Arve. Near St. Gervais we alighted,

and walked across some meadows to the Hotel du Mont Joli. Entering the front door we found ourselves in a kitchen, and I very much doubted the powers of the establishment to furnish the dinner which Mr. Birbeck ordered; however, I was most agreeably deceived, for our host, first informing Mr. Templer and Mr. Birbeck that their friends had not arrived, showed us into a pretty *salle à manger*, separate from the house, and in a short time served up a capital dinner, which we washed down with as capital wine. Let any one who wishes to spend a few days in retirement, amidst beautiful scenery, and with every comfort around him, take up his quarters at the Hotel du Mont Joli, St. Gervais.

As we had determined to reach Contamines that night, we were obliged, although reluctantly, to leave our excellent quarters; so Mr. Coleman and I strapped on our knapsacks, Mr. Williams adjusted the apology for one, which, with the assistance of Paul, the obliging waiter of the Hotel de Londres, he had concocted with some straps and a large

sheet of stiff paper, and we set off. As we turned into the road we heard a laugh, and looking up, discovered Mr. Templer and Mr. Birbeck criticising us from a window above. An exchange of jokes, a "*bon voyage*," and away we went. It was twilight, and as we topped the hill above the village, the church bell was tolling softly; the village was in gloom, while the church spire rose clear and distinct in the light still shining upon the mountains above; not a breeze was stirring; everything so breathed of peace and harmony that we involuntarily paused to contemplate the scene, and when we resumed our journey our lengthened silence proved its influence on our minds. It soon became dark, but the road was pretty good, and we were enlivened by the music of a mountain stream which tumbled along in close proximity to our course. In two hours we reached Contamines, and put up at one of the wretched hotels of the place. After partaking of some coffee we retired to our bedrooms, in a large barn-like building on the opposite side of the road, and were soon asleep. At five o'clock the next morn-

ing we were called, and after a hasty breakfast left the place. A short distance from Contamines we crossed a bridge over the Bon Nant, near some saw mills, and struck into a path on the right, through fields forming the bottom of a ravine. We saw plenty of wild crocus and other flowers, the morning was fresh and invigorating, and we stepped out lustily. At the end of the ravine we came to the church of Notre Dame de la Gorge, standing, with the exception of a single house (that I suppose of the *curé*), alone. For a long distance the road approaching the church was lined on each side by a number of little stone chapels, like sentry boxes, placed at equal distances, and containing either some paltry prints or effigies.

The end of the ravine was almost perpendicular ; but a very steep path, consisting of broad steps, formed partly from the bare rock of the mountain, partly of stones artificially placed, led us out of the ravine to the village of Nant Bourant. After passing the village, we continued our course along the valley which gradually became more open.

The pasturage appeared very rich, and I observed horses, cows, and sheep grazing in considerable numbers, some of them high up the sides of the peaks, with an attendant maiden seated upon some granite block, and busily employed in knitting.

We stopped at a small *châlet* and obtained some bread and milk. There were two dirty looking beds for the accommodation of travellers; and the place, altogether, smelt so disagreeably that we were glad to get out once more into the fresh air. Shortly after leaving the *châlet* we met a man from whom, with some difficulty, on account of his *patois*, we extracted the information that he had come that morning from *Cormayeur*, and that it would be impossible for us to go to the *Col de la Seigne* with any chance of returning to *Chamouni* by Sunday evening. This was rather vexing, but as we could not immediately decide what course to pursue we went on.

We passed on over several large snow fields, and came to a piece of level ground called the *Plain des Dames*, where is a cairn

or heap of stones, said to mark the spot on which a lady and suite perished in a snow storm, in days "lang syne." The custom is for every traveller to add a stone to the heap, and we each did so.

We now consulted together, and determined to give up our intended visit to the Col de la Seigne, in order to be at Chamouni in time for our ascent on Monday. Mr. Coleman got out his sketching materials, and I and Mr. Williams toiled on over the snow to the top of the Col du Bonhomme. Near the top we met a party of tourists coming down. First came the gentlemen racing down the snow, alpenstock in hand, and then the mules with their baggage, followed by the drivers and guides, altogether forming a very pleasing picture. We stopped and spoke together in French, although I have a strong impression that the spokesman on their side was an Englishman, like myself. They had come from Cormayeur. The guides appeared surprised to see us there without guides and baggage (for we had left our knapsacks with Mr. Coleman), and although it may be all

very well to travel alone over the pass in such fine weather as we had, yet in stormy weather it must be very dangerous. It took us some time to attain the summit of the Col, which is eight thousand feet above the sea level. We were several times deceived by supposing that the point before us was the highest, and, when we surmounted it, finding another still higher.

Upon the summit, looking back we saw the whole of the valley of Mont Joie which we had just traversed. On the right, concealing Mont Blanc, rose a chain of frowning rocks, scarred by winter's storms, and bearing here and there large patches of snow on their furrowed sides; on the left more rocks and grassy mountains, whilst from our feet stretched the bottom of the valley in a long series of undulations, plains and hillocks covered with verdure, save where interrupted near the summit of the pass by the snow fields we had crossed over. A brawling stream could be traced threading its way along the centre of the valley until lost in the distance; the village of Contamines and

the various chalets were seen through the pure atmosphere with startling distinctness ; light fleecy clouds were playing about the mountains, partially veiling them from our sight ; the valley was filled with sunshine, and everything spoke to the heart of joy and gladness. It was truly a glorious vision ! We turned round, and what a change ! On the Italian side there was so dense a mist that we could not see fifty yards before us.

This place is not without historical associations, for Gallenga, in his "History of Piedmont," informs us that in the year 1689, eight hundred exiled Waldenses, determined upon returning to their native country, marched across the pass, cut their way through two thousand five hundred Frenchmen, posted to dispute the passage of the Dora, and stood at last upon their own ground at Balsille, on the top of the valley of Saint Martin.

We sat down to rest ourselves for a short time upon a heap of stones built up to support a large wooden cross, which was lying on the ground, having most likely been thrown down by some storm ; and then made

our way back to Mr. Coleman, whom we found busily employed in making a sketch of the curious aiguille, the two peaks of which are known as the "Bon homme" and the "Femme du bonhomme." I took a sketch of the pass, and then we retraced our steps to Contamines. On our way we again stopped at the *châlet* for milk, and it made my flesh creep when the old dame who kept it pressed us to stop there all night. We had found the accommodation at Contamines so bad that we passed through and continued our journey to St. Gervais. Near that place we were caught in a heavy shower of rain and took shelter under a shed—where we had not been ten minutes when I found myself covered with flies. I never saw such a place as Chamouni for flies—it was swarming with them, and at the hotel de Londres they seemed like the Harpies, determined to dispute possession of every mouthful. At nightfall we found ourselves once more under the roof of the Hotel du Mont Joli. Mr. Templer and Mr. Birbeck had left; but their friends, Messrs. Smyth, Hudson, Kennedy, Ainslie, Stephen-

son, and Joad were there. We found that they were fully equipped with tent, ropes, ice axes, and every requisite for alpine travelling, in which they had gained much experience. They had already tried the ascent of Mont Blanc from Cormayeur, but a fog coming on they were obliged to give up the attempt when within two hours of the top. It was then their intention to try the ascent from St. Gervais.

August 12th. Went over the Col de la Forclaz to Chamouni. The passage over this place is not so interesting, I believe, as that by the Col de Voza. Our upward path lay through pine woods, which generally shut out the view; but near the top of the mountain the trees were thinner, and there was a fine sward. We had as usual a beautiful day, quantities of alpine flowers decked the sides of the path, and small beetles, of a lovely green colour, were busily flitting about in the sun. Our downward course also lay for some distance through the pine woods; but at last we caught sight of the village of Les Ouches, which we reached by a short cut through

some fields, and after resting there awhile, we pursued our journey to Chamouni, the Glacier des Bossons forming as usual a conspicuous object in the landscape. It being Sunday we met numbers of people returning from the village, and I uttered more "*Bon jours*" than I had ever done in my life before; as, with scarcely an exception, all saluted us as they passed.

So kindly had we been treated at the Hotel des Londres, that upon entering the door it seemed like returning home. Mr. Templer was expecting us; and in the evening we again consulted with Victor Tairraz, and gave orders for the preparation of the provisions to be carried up with us—a list of which was made out and placed in our hands by the landlord. I went to bed, but had very little sleep for thinking over our undertaking.

Monday, August 13th. The weather was fair, and apparently nothing remained to be done but to engage the guides, who, with Victor Tairraz and his brother Jean, should accompany us; but here an unforeseen diffi-

culty occurred, and for the first time I became acquainted with the absurd and arbitrary rules by which the system of guides at Chamouni is regulated. According to these rules the guides are entered on a roll, and take their turn for employment without reference to the wishes of travellers, so that when Victor Tairraz went to the bureau of the chief guide in order to obtain the guides, he was told by that functionary that, it not being his turn on the roll, he would not allow him to go with us. Victor came back with a very blank face to tell us, and I went with Mr. Templer and Mr. Birbeck to remonstrate, but all to no purpose. In vain we represented that in consequence of the well known experience and courage of Victor, we felt a confidence in him which we should not have in another, and that we considered it most important to have, as our leading guide, one who could speak English so well. No! The rules were like the laws of the Medes and Persians, and after a stormy discussion, we vowed we would not go at all. We passed the rest of the day gloomily enough; several

gentlemen staying at the hotel felt as much annoyed at the rules as we did, and at last we resolved, if possible, to break through them and go up Mont Blanc in our own way and with those we liked. In the evening we visited the source of the Arveiron, at the bottom of the Glacier des Bois. It was a wild scene—in front of us, an ice cliff, pierced by a cavern, whence the river issued in a broad sheet, and all around enormous blocks of granite, carried down on the glacier until they had tumbled over on to the plain. On our return we engaged a guide for the Jardin.

CHAPTER VI.

Excursion to the Jardin—A Lady Traveller—Fresh Consultation—Preparations for the Ascent.

TUESDAY, August 14th. Started early in the morning with Mr. Coleman, Mr. Williams, and the guide, for the far famed Jardin, situated in the midst of the Glacier de Talèfre. As before we mounted to the Châlet of Montanvert, where many people sleep the previous night in order to start fresh the next morning. We remained at the châlet for a short time whilst our guide filled his knapsack with provisions, and a party of Oxford students coming up, who were also bound on the same excursion, we agreed to travel together. A gentleman who had visited the Jardin the day before had told me he had seen some marmots, and I therefore hired a gun to carry with me; but although we twice heard the shrill whistle by which these

animals warn their companions of danger, we could not see one. Instead of descending at once upon the ice, we skirted the glacier for some distance in an upward direction, until we reached the base of the Aiguille de Charmoz. Our path lay across the faces of two rocks, called Le Grand and Le Petit Pont, of which a good idea may be formed, by supposing a number of slates of different sizes, placed with their flat sides against one another, and standing on end in a slanting direction, a little out of the perpendicular. The top edges of the slates would represent the ledges over which you pass. These in the rocks themselves are about three or four inches broad; they afford good holding for the feet and hands, and are very easy to pass over.

A short time after leaving the "Ponts," we descended amongst the blocks of the Moraine, some of which were of tremendous size, and after some rough travelling, we reached the ice and commenced crossing over. The ice was pretty level, but we had to scramble over several moraines in our course.

The whole surface of the glacier was melting with the heat, and rills of water were flowing along in all directions. One stream lost itself in a large round hole in the ice, termed a "Moulin," down which it poured with terrible violence.

On the other side we ascended the glacier a little, and then climbed up the rocks of the Couvercle, where, far above the glacier, we sat down to discuss part of the contents of our knapsack. The spot chosen was covered with herbage, and, being backed by the rocks above, was delightfully warm, whilst the prospect before us was wonderful in its extent, comprising a large portion of the Mer de Glace, and the whole of the Glacier du Géant, stretching away almost to the summit of Mont Blanc. I learnt that the guides sometimes give our resting place the name of the "Jardin des Dames," because, whenever (as is frequently the case) ladies become exhausted by the time they reach it the guides complacently inform them they are at the Jardin, and the fair aspirants return to boast of the feat they have performed. When

we were preparing to leave this spot, the guides drew our attention to another party of gentlemen approaching over the glacier below. It was some time before we could distinguish them, and when we did, they looked like pigmies in the distance. As soon as they approached near enough we fired the gun and sent forth the usual alpine scream in order to attract their attention, and they soon discovered us and screamed in return.

We waited for them to join us, and were concerned to hear that shortly after the gun was fired, a stone fell from one of the rocks and bounded across their path within a yard of one gentleman's head. It was a narrow escape, and I mention the circumstance to show how necessary it is in those regions to abstain from everything likely to produce concussion of the air, which was very likely the cause of the stone falling. Having fraternised with the new comers, we began to climb again by a narrow and precipitous path which led round the Couvercle to the rocky basin containing the Glacier du Talèfre, and crossing over a large space of snow, we

arrived at the patch of grass called the Jardin, with the appearance of which we were all disappointed, for it was not so gay with flowers as we expected; but this, probably, was in consequence of the late period at which it became clear of snow: and if disappointed with the appearance of the Jardin itself, the journey into the midst of this alpine wilderness well repaid us. So grand were the views from all points, that the eye was dazzled and the mind lost in astonishment. Looking down the Mer de Glace when half way across, a fine view was obtained of the portion we had traversed in going to the Chapeau; the view being shut in by the mountains on the other side of the Vale of Chamouni, and then, turning round, the glance rested upon the aiguilles of the Géant, Jorasse, and Tacul, with the glaciers of Tacul, Lechaud and Talèfre pouring their icy masses into the Mer de Glace. At the Jardin we were in the midst of a glacier, surrounded by rugged rocks, forming a scene of appalling desolation scarcely conceivable. To thoroughly feel the effect of such a scene

upon the mind, it would be necessary to be alone: there were too many of us to be sad; each party produced their provisions, and the toast and joke went round. Before we had finished our repast, three large black birds, that appeared very much like jackdaws, (they were too small for crows) perched upon a rock at some distance off, evidently awaiting our retreat in order to pick up the crumbs. Dinner over, we amused ourselves by examining a quantity of address cards we found packed away in a broken bottle, and after adding our own to the number we carefully returned the bottle to the hole from which we had drawn it. The guides soon began to get impatient for our return, and they were right, for day began to decline by the time we approached the Châlet at Montanvert. Near the "Ponts" a large portion of a rock, about ten yards a-head of us, fell down, and when we entered the châlet, our Oxford friends, who were before us, enquired whether we had seen it fall, as their guide had observed it and warned them it was going to do so. To my surprise, we found at the

châlet the French lady and gentleman we had seen at Servoz, who said they were going to the Jardin the next day. When I told the lady she would require nails in her boots, she immediately lifted up one of her feet and showed the sole of her boot, well studded with them. As to the "Ponts," she said she should jump over them, and suiting the action to the word, she placed her hands on her husband's shoulders and gave a spring, which nearly sent him over. I was happy to hear, afterwards, that dressed "en cavalier" she succeeded in visiting the Jardin the next day.

It was nightfall when we got back to Chamouni, and again we held council concerning our projected ascent of the mountain.

We found upon enquiry that the penalty upon a guide for disobeying the rules was a fine or two days imprisonment, and as we promised to pay any fine that might be imposed, Victor said he would run the risk of imprisonment. "If," said he, "I was imprisoned for being a thief, I might be ashamed ;

but I do not think it any shame to be imprisoned for going up Mont Blanc, and I will go with you, gentlemen.” We assured him we would, if possible, go to prison with him ; at any rate, that we would escort him out of the village, and also make a friendly call and have a bottle of wine with him ;* and this important point being settled, we agreed to take Victor, his brother Jean, and eight more guides, which we considered sufficient ; we issued fresh instructions for the preparation of provisions ; I sent my boots to be resoled and nailed, and once more we seemed in a fair way of realising our hopes. Mr. Templer in the course of the day, had heard that five men had been seen on the top of the mountain, and as we felt sure they must be the party from St. Gervais, we sat up expecting to see them arrive, but were disappointed.

* Victor was, after our departure, fined twenty-five francs, in addition to which, he had to pay twenty-five francs expenses.

CHAPTER VII.

Arrival of Travellers who had ascended Mont Blanc without Guides—Procuring Guides—The Start—Ascent to the Grands Mulets—Sunset.

WEDNESDAY, August 15th. The morning was lovely, and everything seemed to promise favourably for our enterprise. Before breakfast, the Rev. C. Smyth, his brother, and Messrs. Hudson, Kennedy, and Ainslie made their appearance, having succeeded in attaining the summit the day before without guides. I happened to be in the court yard of the hotel when they came in, and it was with feelings of pride that I congratulated my countrymen on their success. They had started on the 13th from St. Gervais with Messrs. Stephenson and Joad in their company, and a whole tribe of porters to carry provisions, blankets, and fuel, to the foot of

the Aiguille du Goûté, where the porters left them, and the party with three Chasseurs, bivouacked on the rocks. On the morning of the 14th, Mr. Stephenson being unwell, declined to proceed, but Mr. Joad, although only fifteen years of age, accompanied them as far as the summit of the Dome du Goûté, where he and the Chasseurs left them to finish their journey alone, which took them about five hours more, and shortly after noon, on the 14th, they stood on the summit of Mont Blanc. That night they descended as far as the Pine Woods, but darkness coming on and being ignorant of the route, they slept part of the night in the wood and part in a chalet. After breakfast I went with Mr. Templer to the chief guide and demanded guides for the ascent of Mont Blanc. He called over the names of eight who ranged themselves for our inspection, when we ascertained that two only had been to the summit, and remonstrated, pointing out that we ought to have at least four who had been there; but all to no purpose. We then said

we should like to take two more experienced guides, and requested to be allowed to engage Victor and Jean Tairraz. No! This could not be allowed; if we wanted more guides we must take them as they came on the roll, which we declined doing.

The guides asked when they were to go? "Immediately," was the reply, and they hastened off to get porters, knapsacks, and other necessities, whilst we returned to the hotel to finish our preparations; which, on my part, consisted in purchasing a veil, gaiters, thick gloves, and a flannel jacket; these were all obtained by the time the guides had breakfasted, and luckily, just before we started, it became Jean Tairraz's turn on the roll to act as guide, so that we were relieved of all anxiety upon his account. After the guides had breakfasted, the court yard of the hotel became for some time a scene of bustle and confusion; but about eleven o'clock, knapsacks being filled and adjusted, and enquiries instituted to ascertain that nothing was left behind, we started from the court yard of the hotel in a long

file, on foot, accompanied by Mr. Templer's brother (Mr. O'K. Templer) and Mr. Williams, who determined to go with us until we reached the ice. Paul, the waiter, in bidding me good bye, said he should bring me some hot coffee and milk to the Grands Mulets the next morning!—a promise which I am sorry to say he did not fulfil. Having deferred the engagement of the guides until this morning, but few people were aware of our intention, and we were not troubled with many spectators of our departure. We crossed the Arve by the bridge near the Hotel de l'Union and made for the Cascade du Dard, where we halted for a short time, and then passed the Châlet des Pelerins, and ascended through the wood on the nearest side of the Glacier des Bossons. It was very hot, and the path near the top became very steep; we toiled slowly on, and the guides and porters began to break boughs off the pine trees to serve as fuel at the Grands Mulets. We soon left behind us the last inhabited hut (the Châlet de la Para) and reached more level ground, winding along a

goat path by the side of a deep ravine to reach the Pierre de l'Echelle.

Unfortunately I had felt rather unwell shortly after leaving Chamouni, and had it not been for Mr. Templer's kind attention, I think I should have been obliged to return. He stayed behind with me, and we sat down on a rock overlooking the ravine, where the fresh air gradually revived me and I got better. At the Pierre de l'Echelle, we unpacked our provisions, and the guides and porters seemed to vie with each other as to which could eat most: the quantity of victuals they disposed of was enormous. Mr. O'K. Templer and Mr. Williams were in such spirits that they thought they might as well go on with us and return with the porters; so taking the ladder we found at the Pierre de l'Echelle, we advanced with undiminished numbers, and were soon upon the ice of the Glacier des Bossons. The guides now produced their ropes, and we were tied together in several parties. Jean Tairraz was in front of me, and Venance Balmat (a young guide, the very incarnation of good humour) behind.

I had on a pair of common stout shoes, without nails, having reserved my newly soled and nailed boots for the ascent from the Grands Mulets, but I found no difficulty in travelling over the glacier. Indeed, if the ascent had been all glacier travelling, it would have been far less fatiguing, but above the Grands Mulets it was all snow.

All description must fail to convey a correct idea of the surprising wonders of the portion of the Glacier des Bossons over which we passed—a chaos of ice blocks and fissures, awful in their giant proportions and extent. At one time skirting the edge of a crevasse—at another crossing one by walking along a sharp edge of ice—now climbing up a mass of ice—now jumping down, we steadily advanced, wrapt in admiration of the sublime grandeur of the scene around us. Here we were face to face with some of nature's most capricious handiwork—the ice beneath our feet fashioned into caverns, studded with mimic gems, mocking the lapidaries art—above our heads, carved into more fantastic forms than artist e'er conceived;

sometimes we beheld a cluster of airy pinna-
cles shining with diamond-like brilliancy in
the sun ; sometimes gigantic blocks of ice,
tossed one upon another, or shooting up
beside our path, seemed threatening to fall
and crush us as we passed.

For a long time we made excellent pro-
gress, but at last met with a check at a large
crevasse in the glacier, where it parts from
the Glacier du Tacconay. When I reached it
I found the ladder placed across the chasm,
which it just spanned. The Messrs. Templer,
Mr. Williams, and two or three guides were
already over, and as soon as I came up, pre-
parations were immediately made for my
passage. A longer rope was attached to my
waist ; one end was thrown over to the guides
on the other side, and the other end held by
those on the side I started from ; and two
alpenstocks were placed on the ladder to
strengthen it. I then crawled over the ladder
on all fours, the rope being always kept tight,
so that had the ladder broken, I should have
been suspended over the abyss : I looked
down whilst crossing, but could not see the

bottom ; probably it might have been two or three hundred feet deep. The ice was of the usual enchanting hues, blue in some parts, in others, emerald green.

Mr. Coleman's party now approached, and it became his turn to cross. The guides took off the short rope and were about to tie the long one round his waist, when, from some misunderstanding, his temper became roused, and to our alarm, he threw the guides from him and leapt the crevasse. He alighted on the edge, which gave way and went down into the chasm, but fortunately he fell forward on the snow, and was assisted up by two guides. We all remonstrated with him upon the impropriety of his conduct in thus endangering his life, and obtained a promise that he would not attempt such another leap.

After this little adventure, we resumed our journey, progressing steadily until we approached the Grands Mulets ; when the porters declined going any further, and began to disencumber themselves of their packs, which our guides were thenceforth to carry.

Mr. O'K. Templer and Mr. Williams,

elated by the success that had hitherto attended us, announced their intention of continuing their ascent, and it consequently became necessary to have more guides; so we drew together on the snow, and after a long discussion, agreed to take two more, whom we chose from among the porters. One of the guides began to grumble because we were breaking their rules by not taking up four guides for each traveller, and at last he turned back, and we chose another porter in his place; we gave the porters who went back orders to bring up more provisions (a list of which was made out and handed to them) the next day, and they wishing us *bon voyage*, began to descend to Chamouni, whilst we (seventeen in all) turned our faces to the Grands Mulets.

I could scarcely believe that those tall and graceful aiguilles, rising out of the desert of snow around, and forming the safe and welcome haven of the wearied voyageur, could be the little cones I had so often and wistfully gazed at from the valley. The walls of the cabin, erected by the guides

upon one of the rocks, are formed of pieces of the rock built up without mortar against the interior lining of wood, consequently the cabin looked so much like part of the rock that we did not observe it until very near. We soon climbed up to it; we heard the guns firing at Chamouni; everybody's countenance beamed with gladness that this part of the ascent was so successfully accomplished; knapsacks and alpenstocks were laid aside; we dispersed ourselves over the rock, and sitting down in the sun, began to change our shoes and stockings. I put on a pair of thick worsted stockings, over these a pair of thick knitted worsted socks, and then my nailed boots; during the process, I was much amused at hearing Victor Tairraz endeavour to persuade Mr. Templer to put on a pair of stockings, the feet of which were damp, by assuring him that at any rate "the beginnings were dry." After our change I sat down on a flat stone in front of the cabin; Mr. Templer and one or two more perched themselves on the top of the aiguille near, and the guides looked out the provisions—lighted a fire in

the stove and arranged everything in the hut—in which were two benches and a long board stretching between the uprights to serve as a table, whilst overhead was a shelf for the bottles and provisions.

It was very warm, and at Victor's suggestion we mounted on to the roof of the cabin to eat our dinner—which we did with excellent appetite. From time to time we watched the progress of two guides, who, as is usual, were sent forward to ascertain the state of the snow and make a track; at last they appeared mere specks in the pathless waste, and we prepared to enjoy the sunset. As the time approached, a thick mist came up the mountain, which obscured everything, and we feared we were doomed to disappointment; when suddenly a tremendous avalanche descended from one of the aiguilles in our rear, and in the twinkling of an eye, as by the touch of a magician's wand, the mist rolled away disclosing a scene of dazzling splendour. In the distance was the setting sun in all his glory. Far as the eye could reach, nothing but mountain tops and ranges

could be seen gilded by his rays. On our left was the crescent moon, at present pale; dark banks of clouds, some of them in appearance perfectly black, were dispersed here and there upon the horizon, and the distant horizon itself appeared like a golden plain in continuation of the earth.

“ Oh! how I wished for Joshua's power
To stay the brightness of that hour! ”

Gradually the sun sank, his last glories lingering in roseate tints upon the Calotte of Mont Blanc; gradually the horizon changed to green and then to cold grey; the moon increased in brightness, and a single star of large magnitude appeared over the summit of Mont Blanc like a crown of light. The rolling away of the mist was, no doubt, caused by the concussion of the air produced by the fall of the avalanche. The effect was startling, and never to be forgotten. Often whilst gazing from Chamouni upon the mist which covered the mountain, have I seen it suddenly rise without apparent cause; but, after witnessing the occurrence which took

place at the Grands Mulets as I have described; I think a cause may be found for those sudden risings of the mist, in the fall of avalanches high up the mountain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Night at the Grands Mulets—Continuation of the Ascent—
The Grand Plateau—Corridor—Mur de la Côte—Petits
Mulets—The Summit—Descent to Chamouni.

DIRECTLY the sun went down it began to get chilly, and we retired to the interior of the cabin. The guides had got some hot water ready by melting snow in a stew-pan that fitted over a hole in the top of the stove, and they soon gave us a cup of tea which we found very refreshing. At the end of the hut a large rug was spread to serve as a bed, with knapsacks for pillows, and as it was very difficult to move about amongst so many people, I laid down with Mr. Williams and Mr. O'K. Templer, intending to go to sleep, but instead of doing so we talked and laughed nearly all night. Whether it was the lightness of the air, or whatever else might be the reason, certainly the smallest approach to a

joke caused roars of laughter. Mr. Coleman began to sketch the interior of the hut, whilst Mr. Templer held the light for him, and the guides took up all sorts of positions on the benches and floors; Victor Tairraz arranged himself under the table, with his back against the upright, something like a spread eagle; another guide, whom we had particularly noticed on account of his tricks and facetiousness, happened to have as companion a guide to whom he seemed very much attached, for he laid down beside him, put his arms round his neck, and they were soon both fast asleep. I had been given to understand that we should be visited by the glacier flea, but, as it did not trouble us, I looked upon it as a mere hum-bug. I have heard that a gentleman who went up after us to the Grands Mulets captured one there and took it down in his watch glass; but I think it might prove an interesting question with some learned society, whether or not the active little insect was taken up from Chamouni by its captor. At length, I dropped off to sleep, but certainly could not have slumbered long when the signal

was given to rise, and Mr. O'K. Templer drew my attention to the facetious little guide and his friend who were kissing one another most affectionately. No sooner were we up than we made preparations for our departure; I put on two pair of flannel trousers, a flannel jacket over my ordinary waistcoat, then a linen coat, and over that a black frock coat, very thick worsted gloves, a veil—which, however, I did not use—and a pair of neutral tint spectacles with side glasses, purchased in London, and which were far better than the small spectacles with common green glass, sold in Chamouni, as the latter scarcely cover the eyes; then two of the guides put on me a huge pair of thick cloth gaiters, my trousers being previously tied close round my ankles to prevent the snow getting up. I was now ready, and could observe what others were doing; Mr. O'K. Templer and Mr. Williams, not being provided with extra clothing, borrowed from the rest; and as there were few amongst us who had not something to spare, they were soon equipped; Mr. O'K. Templer had no

gloves, but ingeniously adopted a pair of stockings as substitutes, and I lent him my shoes. All the guides greased their faces, and one of them happened to get hold of the burnt wick of the candle, with which he soon made his face akin to that of Othello: roars of laughter followed the discovery. The cabin became so hot, and the resinous smell from the burnt wood so strong, that I could scarcely breathe; once or twice I opened one of the windows, but the guides, who seemed to delight in warmth, soon shut it again, and being unable to stand it any longer, I went outside and took my old seat on the flat stone in front of the cabin. The moon was down, and for upwards of half an hour, I sat peering into the gloom. As the eye became accustomed to the darkness, I began to make out the dim outlines of the stupendous scenery by which I was surrounded; no sound broke the solemn stillness, save now and then the hum of voices from the hut, and never did I more acutely feel what an insignificant atom is man in the vast creation.

At length the door of the cabin opened ; my companions came out, and we bade adieu for a time to the cabin on the Grands Mulets. We descended to the snow, and formed in line, I being about number eight ; Jean Tairraz placed himself before me ; but instead of my laughing young guide Venance Balmat, I had a very tall fellow behind me ; we carried two lanterns, and were all tied together in a string. In descending from the plateau in front of the cabin to the snow beneath, I dislodged a large piece of rock with my foot, which rolled down upon Jean Tairraz's leg, luckily, without doing him much injury.

Now commenced the real work, for it was all snow travelling, and very steep ; Victor Tairraz led, being about ten yards a-head, with a rope round his waist, and we took a winding course to break the steepness of the ascent ; once, our procession took a form something like the figure eight, and I called out to stop in order that I might admire it. There was something very solemn in the appearance of our party, dimly shown by the

light of our two lanterns, as we toiled on over the desolate waste; when Victor came to a crevasse, he picked out a part well bridged over by the snow, and trying it with the alpenstock, crawled over on his hands and knees, or jumped it, as the case required; then he sat down facing us, and digging his feet and alpenstock into the snow, helped another guide over by means of the rope; this one also sat down, and so the operation went on until all were safely landed on the other side. Many of the snow bridges did not reach completely over the opening, or were broken in the middle; and when this was the case, the person crossing stepped cautiously upon the bridge and then sprang over the opening, the guides on the other side at the moment he took the leap giving a sudden pull at the rope that carried him well over.

We travelled on our zig-zag path for some time without anything material occurring except that Mr. Coleman lost his alpenstock, which slipped out of his hand and disappeared down a crevasse. This, in my opinion, was

one great cause of his failing to reach the summit, although after a while the guides supplied him with another, and cut one in half to make up the number for themselves.

At length we stood upon the Grand Plateau, in crossing which there was a slight descent; on our right was an amphitheatre of rocks enclosing the Plateau; on our left a tremendous crevasse. All the crevasses above the Grands Mulets were very large; the beauty of some of them, viewed through the breaks in the snow bridges, was enchanting; such lovely tints were displayed, and there was such an air of mystery about their dark recesses, as to call to mind the tales of one's childhood, and almost make one imagine them inhabited by some gnome or spirit of the mountain. In crossing the Plateau, Victor desired us to be silent, for fear the concussion of the air, produced by the voice, should bring down an avalanche; but notwithstanding this caution, a guide behind me would persist in chattering. I can only account for his behaviour by supposing that he was the one that Mr. Williams spoke of as

having swallowed a tumbler full of raw brandy immediately before quitting the Grands Mulets.

Day began to dawn when we were nearly across, and although the morning was rather dull, the view was grand—disclosing the lake of Geneva, with the intervening mountains and Jura in the distance.

When it was sufficiently light to see one another, we were much struck with the ghastly appearance of our faces; but no one complained—we were all in good spirits, and to our great amusement, Mr. Williams cut a caper in the snow and pelted one of the guides with a snow-ball; he explained to me afterwards that this exuberance of joy was caused by his supposing that in another half hour we should be at the summit—so close did it appear, whereas we still had some hours toil before us: before going on we had a cup of wine, and I ate a piece of fowl.

After crossing the Grand Plateau, we approached the base of the Mont Maudit, where we had to get over a rather dangerous crevasse; and then bearing to the right to-

wards the Rochers Rouges, began to mount the Corridor—a valley of snow between the Mont Maudit and the Rochers Rouges. I found this very fatiguing, for being tall and heavy my feet sank deep in the snow, and, to add to the exertion, every now and then my foot slipped sideways down the slope, causing me to halt in order to recover myself; the tall guide behind occasionally passed the end of his alpenstock between the rope surrounding my waist and my side, which afforded me great assistance by preventing my slipping: Jean Tairraz also assisted me as much as possible, and instructed me how to plant my feet so as to stand firm. The Messrs. Templer and Mr. Williams being light weights, now got some distance a-head, and Mr. Coleman once passed me, but I soon resumed my former position. My tall guide had been for some time complaining of his feet, which he was afraid would be frost bitten, so another of the guides beat them for him with a stick; but when near the top of the Corridor, he went off and left me, and I suppose returned to the Grands Mulets.

In ascending the Corridor, the walking was so laborious I had not been able to look much about me ; but when near the top, I perceived some one coming back, which proved to be Mr. O'K. Templer, who told me he had tried three times to get up the Mur de la Côte and failed, because his shoes were without nails : on this account he was obliged, although as fresh as ever, to return without accomplishing the ascent. Two guides turned back with him, and during his descent to the Grands Mulets, the following curious incident occurred, which he related to me upon my return to Chamouni. In crossing a crevasse, one of the guides went over first, and then assisted Mr. O'K. Templer to get over ; they both sat down as usual holding the rope in readiness to assist the other guide, who approached the crevasse, tried the snow bridge by poking his alpenstock into it several times, began chattering to the guide already across, and at last fairly turned round with his back to them, sank on his knees in the snow and began praying ; when he rose again he timidly approached the crevasse, and at length ventured

on the bridge and took a jump, when Mr. O'K. Templer, who felt great contempt for his cowardice, gave the rope a pull that fetched him over like a shot.

At the top of the Corridor I looked up, and it was with a feeling of awe that I beheld the enormous Dome or Calotte towering above me; at that moment a large cloud borne swiftly along by the wind was dashed against it, and it was hidden from our sight only to reappear in a short time in all its sublimity of outline.

“Mighty Mont Blanc, thou wert to me
That minute, with thy brow in heaven
As sure a sign of Deity
As e'er to mortal gaze was given.
Nor ever, were I destin'd yet
To live my life twice o'er again,
Can I the deep felt awe forget,
The dream—the trance that wrapt me then!”

Venance Balmat, my companion to the Grands Mulets, and another young guide, Venance Ducroz, now joined us (where they came from I can't tell, it seemed as if they had dropped from the skies, so sudden was their appearance), and the latter went first with his axe, in order to clear out and cut

steps in the Mur de la Côte, which Mr. Templer and Mr. Williams had already surmounted. Near the foot of the Mur we passed a guide who was lying on the snow, too much affected by the rarefaction of the air to be able to proceed further. When I began to mount the Mur de la Côte all my fatigue left me; there was no side slipping here, nothing to do but to climb. We went nearly straight up, bearing a little to the right as we ascended, and were soon at the top—only stopping twice whilst Venance Ducroz rested for a short time. The dangers of this part of the ascent have been greatly exaggerated.

In a short time we heard the guns firing at Chamouni for Mr. Templer, who was on the Summit, and we saw Mr. Williams half-way up the Calotte. The Calotte, upon which there was much more ice than snow, was nearly as fatiguing to climb as the Corridor; I adopted the plan of counting fifty steps and then resting. A short way up we passed the “Petits Mulets” (small rocks cropping out of the Calotte) and then “Le dernier

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Rocher.” Half-way up I met Mr. Templer, and near the top, Mr. Williams, coming down, at which I was much vexed, for we ought certainly to have all assembled together on the Summit; but this was the fault of the guides who would not allow them to stay any longer.

When close to the Summit, it still appeared a long way off. Jean marshalled us in a row, we took hold of each other's arms—a little run of half a dozen steps, and we were there. I was surprised to find it consisted of a sharp ridge, running east and west, which we passed over. At the moment I set my foot upon the Summit I heard the faint sound of a gun fired at Chamouni, and felt proud of my success.* I had left my watch at Chamouni, but as near as I could judge it was about noon. During our ascent of the Mur de la Côte and Calotte, the north wind was blowing violently, tearing up the icy particles and dashing them against our faces with cutting

* I had always understood that the report of canon could not be heard at the top of Mont Blanc, but we heard every discharge distinctly.

violence ; but when we sat down on the Italian side of the ridge we were sheltered from the wind and enjoyed the warmth of the sunshine : it was stepping from winter to summer in a moment. Jean Tairraz pointed out all the famous parts of the wonderful panorama by which we were surrounded, the most prominent being Monte Rosa, Mont Cervin, and the snow crowned mountains of the Bernese Oberland ; and in gazing over the broad expanse, I felt repaid for all that I had undergone. From the badness of the arrangements we had no wine to drink a toast ; but we shook hands and congratulated each other on our success, at which my two young guides, who had never been on the Summit before, were delighted. Instead of the Champagne, I produced a pair of bracelets I had purchased at Montanvert for my wife, and here was at once a subject for conversation ; the guides laughed, Jean Tairraz approved of the sentiment which had prompted me to carry them up with me, and gave it as his opinion that Madame would be very proud of the present. I then laid

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my head upon Balmat's lap and dozed for about five minutes, when the talking of the guides awoke me and we prepared to descend, having been on the Summit about half an hour. As I turned to leave, I felt a disagreeable sensation of dryness in my mouth, and in vain I rolled my tongue about, for it was like a stick, and I could not muster up the smallest quantity of saliva; we rummaged all our pockets, and Jean found a prune and a small piece of dry bread, which somewhat relieved me. In the distance we saw Mr. Coleman (who had, from excessive fatigue and cold, been obliged to give up the ascent when very near the Summit), slowly descending with his guides. We hastened on and overtook them, and in one of their knapsacks, to our joy, we found the bottle of champagne which ought to have been drunk on the Summit; the cork was soon extracted, and a leathern cup being produced, we had two rounds.

In descending the Mur de la Côte, I found it easier to go down some parts with my back to it, digging my heels into the steps. The rest of the way to the Grands

Mulets we went any how—walking, sliding, and plunging through the snow: in one part of our course Jean pointed out the track of a Chamois. The descent towards one crevasse (probably the same over which Mr. O’K. Templer’s guide hesitated to pass), was very steep; my young guide Venance Ducroz was first, and I was second; when he reached the edge he hesitated, looked back and smiled; one of Mr. Coleman’s guides, Simon David, an “Ancien guide,” immediately came forward, tried the snow with his alpenstock, stepped at once fearlessly on the bridge without any rope and passed over; Ducroz then also passed over, and we all followed. On the Grand Plateau we saw the fragments of a block of ice which had lately fallen, and Jean begged me to hurry across. Soon the Grands Mulets appeared in sight; but, unfortunately, when near the wished for haven, we followed a false foot track in the snow, which led to a precipice; we had to turn our faces to the mountain and retrace our steps upwards for about ten yards, and those ten yards appeared to me more fatiguing than all.

the rest of the journey. When we arrived at the cabin, in addition to our own party, we found two young gentlemen, Mr. Chapman and Mr. Heard, an American, who had come up with their guides to try the ascent, and who reached the top the next morning in good style. No sooner did I arrive at the Grands Mulets than I was supplied by Mr. O'K. Templer with some meat and bread, and two glasses of beer, which put fresh life into me.

Mr. Templer and his brother left, and as soon as possible I followed, with Mr. Williams and the rest of the guides, except two, who stopped with Mr. Coleman. We made excellent progress over the glacier; at one part we had to get over a round hummock of ice, against which Mr. Templer's party had left the ladder standing for our use; we also left it, and slid down the opposite side. Near the base of the Aiguille du Midi, Jean Tairraz made us stop, as part of the rock above seemed about to fall; we waited about three minutes, and then ran as fast as possible until out of danger. A little

below the Châlet de la Para, Mr. Williams felt himself so exhausted that we were obliged to return to the châlet and leave him behind. The keeper of the châlet made up a bed, and undertook to take the greatest care of him; and this promise he faithfully fulfilled, for Mr. Williams, on his return to Chamouni, spoke very highly of his kindness.

Shortly after leaving the châlet, we heard the guns at Chamouni announcing the arrival of Mr. Templer at the hotel. We stopped at the Châlet du Dard to have some wine, and then descended as rapidly as we could; and the moment we appeared in the courtyard of the Hotel de Londres the guns again fired, Monsieur Tairraz presented me with the *Vin d'honneur*, and I received the congratulations of those present on my success. I had a warm bath and some coffee as soon as possible, and when I retired to my bedroom I found the passage strewn with rose leaves and a handsome nosegay on the table.

CHAPTER IX.

Effects of the Ascent — Observations — The Flegère —
Departure from Chamouni — Confluence of the Arve
and the Rhone — Arrival at Paris — The Exhibition —
Home.

AUGUST 17th. Mr. Coleman and Mr. Williams joined us. I found myself very little the worse for the ascent ; my eyes were quite well, and although in two or three days I lost the skin off the upper part of my face, I did not feel much pain, as the lower part of my face was protected by my beard and moustache, which I had allowed to grow. Mr. Templer (who had shown the activity of a chamois) and his brother were quite well ; Mr. Williams's eyes were dreadfully inflamed, for he wore neither spectacles nor veil, and both he and Mr. Coleman suffered severely in the lower part of the face. Upon awaking on the second morning after the ascent, my

eyes had lost all perception of colours; the room and everything in it appeared white, and so continued for some minutes. After a while I was able to distinguish the true colour of the bedstead, which approached nearly to white, and gradually the other articles in the room appeared of their proper colours.

I would advise all persons wishing to make the ascent to train as much as possible beforehand, and by all means to grease their faces well at the Grands Mulets, and wear spectacles; but it would be difficult to give any advice as to what quantity of clothing they should wear, or what they should eat and drink, so much depends upon the weather and the constitution of the person: for instance, the guides dissuade you from drinking lemonade during the ascent; but a cupfull I had seemed to refresh me more than anything else, and I think the only general rule to be followed is to take as little as possible, and let that little be what you seem to fancy.

I shall here describe the manner in which each of our party was affected during the ascent.

The Messrs. Templer seemed to have suffered little, if anything; I was very warm all the time, and at the top of the Corridor found it necessary to take off my cloth coat; I had no difficulty in breathing, but suffered from fatigue, which appeared centered in that part of the leg, extending from six inches above to six inches below the knee: I have already spoken of the dryness in my mouth on leaving the Summit. Mr. Coleman breathed freely, but was knocked up by the fatigue and cold, and coming back felt great inclination to sleep. Mr. Williams experienced at one time an uncontrollable desire to sleep, and had great difficulty in breathing during the ascent of the Calotte. He has since described his feelings to me in a letter, as follows:—
“It was at the Petits Mulets that I experienced the greatest pain and inconvenience from the rarefaction of the air. I may remark that I was the only one of our party that was at all affected by it. The agony was dreadful; I could not go more than ten yards at a time, when I was compelled to stop and lie down on my back from sheer

exhaustion (just as if I had run for two miles without stopping), and allow my chest to reinflate, during which time the pain that I suffered was most excruciating and almost insupportable."

A great many of the people who go up Mont Blanc only appear to care about "doing" it in as short a time as possible; they seem to pay no attention to the wonders by which they are surrounded, and often when they get to the top they are in no condition to look at anything; if, however, travellers were to make three days of the ascent instead of two, which I think might be easily managed by sleeping somewhere about the Grand Plateau, the excursion would be much more pleasing than at present, as they would be able to pay greater attention to the scenery around them.

It was a matter of great congratulation that no untoward accident had happened to mar the pleasure of our trip, and, nothing daunted by his failure, Mr. Coleman announced his determination to try again; he did so, and on the 29th August, 1855,

deservedly succeeded in attaining the Summit, where he remained for a full hour. Upon leaving the Grands Mulets, he had the advantage of a moonlight, so bright, that on arriving at the Petit Plateau, Mont Buet, the Aiguilles rouges, and the valley of Chamouni, with the village itself, were discernable; and warned by the loss of his alpenstock upon the former occasion, he had a hole bored through the one he then took, and tied it by a string to the button hole of his coat.

Seated at my ease on the terrace of the hotel, I had the pleasure of watching, through my telescope, the ascent of Mr. Heard and Mr. Chapman. As soon as they returned, Mr. Templer ran to the other hotel to see them, and was immediately accosted by one of our transatlantic brethren with, "Well, stranger, I guess you're one of those who went up Mount Blank yesterday."

In the evening we settled with the guides, first announcing that we should pay every man his full money whether he had been to the top or not, at which those who had not been there were very much pleased; and then

upon going into our accounts and paying everything, we found our shares were exactly £12 7s. 6d. each—a very moderate sum to what persons making the ascent usually pay.

On Saturday I walked up the Flegère, whence with a good telescope I could perceive the tracks we had made in the snow on Mont Blanc, and could also see the whole length of the Mer de Glace; whilst watching the fall of a large body of water over the side of the Glacier des Bois, it suddenly ceased and in a few minutes began again, but the body of water was not nearly so large as before.

Sunday, the 19th August, I and Mr. Williams bade adieu to Chamouni, *en route* by Geneva to Paris; and when we lost sight of the glaciers I felt a regret that those only, who know how fascinating a pursuit it is to explore their recesses, can imagine. We took care before we left Geneva to pay a visit to the point where the Arve joins the Rhone. For a long distance so swift is the “arrowy Rhone” that it effectually prevents the muddy Arve from mingling with its bright blue waters, and a straight line of demarcation can

be traced between the two. The waters of the Rhone are carried obliquely across those of the Arve, and impinge upon a rock where the river takes a sudden bend. At this point the waters of the Arve at length mix with it, and the Rhone thenceforth loses its beautiful colour. On Monday we crossed the Jura, and on Tuesday evening, the 21st August, arrived at Paris, where I parted with Mr. Williams.

The city was all gaiety and rejoicing, on account of the visit of her Majesty our Queen and her Royal Consort. Triumphal arches ornamented the Boulevards, and flags were fluttering in all directions. At one of the guard houses I observed that the English flag alone was suspended over the door, one of those delicate compliments which our allies so well know how to pay. In consequence, I suppose, of the impression made by the scenery I had just left, I did not feel half the pleasure which former visits to Paris had afforded me. For three days I wandered through the exhibition, which, although nothing in comparison to the size of our own,

contained a most important collection. The first day I heard, upon entering, the cheers which announced the Queen's departure, and the second, I saw his Royal Highness Prince Albert employing himself very busily amongst the stands. I was particularly astonished with the size of the *annexe* for machinery which was well filled with articles of continental manufacture, and might act I thought as a hint to our engineers and manufacturers to mind what they are about. I considered we were but poorly represented in this department; although the machinery displayed showed, upon inspection, a much better finish than that of foreign manufacture.

I sat down upon a bench next to an old man, with the cross of the Legion of Honour on his breast, who had been, he told me, for some time during the last war a prisoner on board one of our hulks at Plymouth, and complained that he had been half starved there. He said he thought he never could have liked an Englishman, but what a wonderful change had taken place! Who could ever have thought that the two nations would

be allies, and shed their blood together fighting side by side?" I took a pinch of snuff out of his box and continued my inspection.

When her Majesty passed along the Boulevards, the people tried to cheer *à l'Anglais*, but it was a dead failure; nothing they could produce, although they seemed to try hard enough, came up to a genuine British hurrah! At the Jardin Mabille—a sort of Vauxhall, only much better, to which I went one evening, some of my countrymen rather astonished the Parisians by their energetic cheering when "God Save the Queen" was played. Upon Saturday I left the gay city, and on Sunday, the 26th August, was again at home.

CHAPTER X.

Concluding remarks.

THE first ascent of Mont Blanc, in 1855, was by a gentleman named Harding. After I left Chamouni, in addition to Mr. Coleman's ascent, was one by Captain Greig, and another by a Mr. Clarke, who encountered very severe weather. This I think was the last. I heard that a gentleman named Ramsay tried from Cormayeur, but not whether he succeeded.

People visiting Chamouni may, with the aid of a good map, easily find their way without guides to the Cascades du Dard and des Pelerins, Montanvert, the source of the Arveiron, the Flegère, and the Brevent. Indeed, if half the money paid to guides during a season for going to these places were well

laid out in finger posts, a map would not be necessary; but no persons unaccustomed to the glaciers should attempt to go on the ice without guides: there they are indispensable, and it would be fool hardy to attempt an excursion without them.

Under such a liberal government as that of Sardinia, I trust that the present rules concerning the guides, causing, as they often do, much annoyance, will not long remain unaltered; but that the tourist will be able to employ those he may choose to pick out, without fear of exposing them to fines or imprisonment. Since my return to England, an eminent geologist related to me, that whilst exploring the mountain near Chamouni last autumn, he wished to employ an old man, formerly on the roll of guides—who was himself a collector of fossils and minerals, knew every spot where they were to be found, and must therefore prove an invaluable companion to assist in any researches he wished to make; but that he was compelled to employ a guide on the roll who knew nothing about the matter, and was not even

allowed to take the old man in addition, unless upon the understanding that he was not to pay him anything! Such regulations are so absurd as scarcely to require comment.

My task is finished. Although not on the roll of guides, I have conducted the reader to the summit of Mont Blanc and brought him home in safety. If on our road I have been fortunate enough to beguile one passing hour, I am amply recompensed.

THE END.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST
BY JOHN BURNET
OF THE SOCIETY OF THE APOSTOLICAL APOSTLES
IN THE CITY OF LONDON
IN TWO VOLUMES
THE FIRST
LONDON, Printed by J. Streater, at the Sign of the Gun, in St. Dunstons Church-yard, 1680.

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Anderson, Eustace

Chamouni and Mont Blanc a visit to the valley and an ascent of the
mountain in the autumn of 1955

London 1856

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